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ABSTRACT

This article addresses difficulty in English-as-a-Second-Language grammar instruction, offering the systemic approach as an alternative method of teaching grammar. Observation of the process of learning various grammatical rules reveals a tendency to make two types of errors (formational and functional). Analysis of grammatical errors made by Turkish students of English highlights the complex nature of the source of mistake production, which can be presented as a mixture of several factors grouped into two categories (linguistic and methodological). Linguistic factors embrace interlingual and intralingual factors. Methodological factors relate to the principles of textbook compiling, on one hand, and methods of material presentation in classroom teaching, on the other. The paper discusses the mechanism of error production on both the interlingual and intralingual levels, describing the systemic approach to teaching. This approach provides learners with holistic pictures of grammatical micro-systems. It helps learners freely navigate within the newly acquired grammatical micro-system and link it to previously acquired knowledge. This method is appropriate for adult learners, because it requires a conscious approach to material acquisition and well-developed thinking skills. The paper emphasizes the importance of considering unique characteristics of the first and second language when teaching ESL to adult learners. (SM)

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ED 468 601

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SYSTEMIC APPROACH IN TEACHING GRAMMAR TO ADULT LEARNERS

The article addresses some issues connected with difficulties in EFL grammar instruction, reasons bringing these difficulties about and their solutions. The paper also offers an alternative method to the traditional atomized teaching of grammatical items called the ***systemic approach****.*

"The central role of grammar in the study of language has become an established tenet of modern linguistics; but outside the hallowed linguistic halls the status of the subject has in recent decades been the subject of much controversy. The pendulum has moved dramatically - from a time when few people questioned the place of grammatical knowledge as an essential element of a person's education to one when few people tried to defend it. Currently, there is a definite although erratic movement in the reverse direction, towards a position, which once again recognizes the importance of grammar" (D. Crystal, p. 189).

Similar views are being expressed in EFL methodology as well[1]: "The advent of new proposals for syllabus based on functional criteria led to the discrediting of grammar teaching, and a downgrading of the importance of grammatical knowledge in language competence. What we have seen more recently has been heralded as a return to grammar. What this probably means is the increasing realization that grammar, far from being peripheral to communicative language use, plays a vital role in achieving meaning and communication, and that teaching materials and methods need to take grammar very seriously indeed, giving due attention to its **semantic** aspects" (Brown, Marks, p. 82; my emphasis).

[1] A number of speakers stressed the importance of teaching grammar at the 7th International BUSEL conference *A Fresh Look at Grammar and Vocabulary: A Quest for Alternative Teaching Approaches?* Bilkent University School of English Language, Bilkent, Ankara, January 24-26, 2002.

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As scholars note, grammar is making a comeback. This comeback, however, is not going to be fast or easy. The old regard of grammar as being the province of scholars, a sophisticated, remote, difficult and even mysterious area of study, has not quite died away[2]. Many teachers still avoid teaching grammar for a number of reasons and few seriously ponder and attempt to answer such questions as *Why is teaching grammar difficult? What is it that makes it intimidating for many?*

I personally lived with these queries for a number of years. There were times when certain grammar problems seemed simply to defy my attempts at understanding them from within, at penetrating their essence, their "soul", as it were, that I could choose the best technique for material presentation from among the various methodological approaches that I tried. This was before I reached certain solutions to the conundrum of the teaching of grammar. It is these solutions, these small "classroom victories" that I would like to share with teachers of English in the present paper. I will also attempt to draw the picture of English grammar that I have discovered as I walked the thorny road a non-native English teacher has to follow.

Out of the three major language sections *sounds*, *grammar* and *lexicon*, grammar stands out as the most complicated system both for students and teachers. Students find grammar to be the hardest section of a foreign language to understand and master. Understanding grammar is a prerequisite for students' progress in language learning. Strictly speaking, if there is no acquisition of grammar, there is no acquisition of language. In terms of teaching too, grammar is the most demanding system. A successful introduction of grammatical items requires certain special skills on the part of the teacher: identifying the appropriate level of language complexity, making good choices of illustrative examples, and most important *presenting the material with clear explanations*, so that difficult concepts are easily understood, easily retained, consciously practiced and learnt.

But how can we, teachers, achieve the necessary clarity and simplicity in introducing grammatical items? Where do we start?

Before addressing the raised issue, let us recall how a grammatical system is defined/viewed by scholars and practicing teachers. According to OED grammar is "That

[2] There is an interesting connection between **grammar** and **glamour**. The latter is considered to be a "corrupt form of grammar in sense, 'profound or occult learning', cp. **gramary(e)**, also Fr. *grimoire*, 'boo of magic'. Popularized by Scott. a. Enchantment, spell, sorcery, magical illusion: *to cast a glamour over*; b. feeling of mystical pleasure, delight, associated with some object or scene, or memory of it; mysterious charm, elusive magic, esp. in poetry (Wyld, p. 485).

department of the study of a language which deals with its inflexional forms or other means of indicating the relations of words in the sentence, and with the rules for employing these in accordance with established usage; usually including also the department which deals with the phonetic system of the language and the principles of its representation in writing" (OED, p. 742).

The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Linguistics gives a broader definition of grammar:

"a) The structure of a language, i.e. the system of morphological categories and forms, syntactic categories and constructions, means of word formation.

b) Branch of linguistics, studying such a structure, its multi-level organization, its categories and their relation to each other;

c) The term grammar is sometimes used to designate the functions of individual grammatical categories or lexico-grammatical multitudes" (EDL, p. 113); e.g. grammar of nouns, verbs, etc.

According to teachers' definitions, grammar, again, is:

a) "rules and patterns which have to be obeyed in order to be communicative and understandable in a given language;
b) a set of rules organizing the proper ways the language is written or spoken as far as the form is concerned;
c) a group of different kinds of language rules used by people to understand each other;
d) a set of rules that govern the way ideas are expressed in a language, both spoken and written;
e) a branch of science that explains the rules occurring in the language;
f) a set of rules which helps us to create correct English sentences, expressions, etc." (Bowen, Marks, p. 77).

Clear enough, grammar is strictly associated with a set of rules operating in a language and only few go beyond this (d. ideas, see further). In other words, *all the above-given definitions are language oriented*. Some might question the statement: *What other than non-language definitions of grammar can there be?*

To answer this question is not as easy as it might appear at first glance and it needs a closer scrutiny of all the language elements making up the grammatical system of a language.

Like any language unit constituents of a grammatical system are bilateral, i.e. they have both form and meaning. In terms of the form, they resemble structural parts of speech (prepositions, conjunctions, etc) more than notional words (nouns, verbs,

adjective, etc.); e. g. grammatical inflections are short, basically one, two or three sounds [**-ed** (past simple), **-s** (III person, singular, present simple), **-'s** (possessive of nouns), **-s/-es** (plural of nouns), **-er** (comparative of adjectives), etc.

In regard to meaning, grammatical affixes resemble functional parts of speech more than notional words. Like the former, grammatical elements are highly abstract in meaning. The mentioned inflectional endings do not represent a chaotic conglomeration. They are structured into small interconnected groups (sets) referring to a particular notional word (noun, verb, etc.) through which they form a larger entity - the system; e. g. **-ed** and **-s** together with other grammatical affixes (**-ing, vowel change, to,** etc.) form a micro-system expressing various grammatical categories the verb is characterized by. The same is true of **-s/-es** forming the micro-system of different language means to denote various grammatical categories of nouns (**-r-en/vowel change, -'s,** etc.). It is through these micro-systems that all grammatical affixes are connected and inter-connected creating a larger language system called **grammar**.

The above-given definitions of grammar as a set of rules is based and can be applied to the language means of expression. The application of the rules to grammatical inflections is an operational procedure aimed to reflect relations typical of a certain segment of extra-linguistic reality. Thus, by adding **-ed** to verbs we impart the meaning of the past, by adding the suffix **-er** to adjectives we designate a higher quality of degree, by affixing **-s** to nouns we change singularity into plurality and so on. **But all these affixes express the mentioned grammatical meanings only in relation to a certain point of count**. Thus, **-ed** expresses a past time in relation to present, **-er** expresses a higher quality only in relation to a certain norm, **-s** designates plurality only in relation to singularity and so on. In other words, meanings of grammatical inflexions consist in **reflecting various objectively existing relations** (people-object, people-phenomena, object-object) existing in the real world.

So that I do not sound like "a voice in the wilderness" let me illustrate what I mean by **"reflecting various objectively existing relations"** with some concrete examples. Prepositions are a good point to start as they are words with pure relational meaning and thus, come very close to the topic of our discussion.

Imagine four groups of students: English, Turkish, Georgian and Russian. Give them one and the same picture: *an apple on the table* [sentence pattern 1 (hereinafter SP)] and ask them to write down what they see (**Table I**):

Table 1

English	Turkish	Georgian	Russian
There is an apple **on** the table	Elma masanın **üzerinde**.	ვაშლი მაგიდა-**ზე**-ა.	Яблоко **на** столе.

The produced sentences will be absolutely equivalent in meaning The students will use not only the lexical equivalents (*apple, table*) but equivalent prepositions as well (**on** = **üzerinde** = **ზე** = **на**) to express the **relation** between the *apple* and *table*. On the surface, the result seems to be self-evident as the meanings of these prepositions are identical and fixed as such in bilingual dictionaries. And yet, at a deeper level, at the level of reflecting **objectively existing relations** there is a very important conclusion to make: *students of the four nationalities use the same preposition* ***on*** *not because the prepositions in the given languages correspond to each other, but because* **the perception of relations between the objects** (apple-table) **is the same in all these languages.** The equivalence of prepositions is based on the identical perception of the mentioned relations*: an object on the surface of another object*.

Let us change the picture and place *a ball in the box* (SP 2; **Table II**).

Table II

English	Turkish	Georgian	Russian
There is a ball in the box.	Top kutunun **içinde**.	ბურთი ყუთ-**ში**-ა.	Мяч **в** ящике.

The result is similar. All the four groups of students (English, Georgian, Russian and Turkish) will again produce sentences equivalent in meaning. In this case too, **the vision of extra-linguistic relations between the objects is entirely the same in all the four languages and it results in the use of equivalent *language means of expression*** (**in** = **içinde** = **ში** = **в**). Hence, the equivalence of prepositions in these sentences too is based on the identical perception of the relations between the *ball* and *box: an object inside a certain space*.

The presented instances pose no difficulties either for teaching or learning and are easily remembered by students. But we, teachers should not lose sight of the fact that it is the **similarity in reflecting a particular extra-linguistic relation** that makes the

mentioned prepositions equivalent and similar cases easy to learn. As soon as the similarity in reflecting objectively existing relations disappears, "mistakes" occur.

Let us continue our examples with prepositions and complicate the test. Let us give our students two more pictures: one with *apples in the tree* (SP 3) and the other with *passengers on the plane* (SP 4; **Table III**):

Table III

English	Turkish	Georgian	Russian
There are apples **in** the tree.	a) Ağacta elmalar var. b) Elmalar ağacın üzerinde.	ვაშლები ხე-ზე აბია.	Яблоки на дереве.
There are a 100 passengers on the plane.	a) Yolçular uçağın içinde. b) Uçakta 100 yolcu var.	მგზავრები თვითმფრინავ-ში არიან.	Пассажиры в самолете.

The sets of produced sentences will vary. In fact, one can observe drastic changes in the use of prepositions. Where English uses **in,** Georgian and Russian make use of **on**. With Turkish it is even more interesting: basically it is the preposition **on** like Georgian and Russian, but the Turks also use **–ta** which is a form of indefinite inflectional marker. The interesting thing about it is that the preposition **on** is invariably used with *branches* where the relation is definitely *an object on an object* but Turkish does not seem to be very discrete in its description of the apples in relation to the tree. Throughout, the *objectively existing relations* are the same. A question begs to be answered: What caused students to choose different - in fact, opposite relational expressions?

The usual explanation in cases such as this is "That's just the way English is." But this is not a satisfactory answer. The core of the matter is that something fundamentally different has taken place in the minds of the students which caused a "switch" from clear equivalence in SP 1 (*There is an apple **on** the table*) to a lack of equivalence in SP 3 (*There are apples **in** the tree*).

What happened?

A study of typical cases (I would not call them mistakes in this context) led me to the conclusion that English on the one hand, and the three other languages on the other, perceive the relations between the mentioned objects in an entirely different way. The "switch" operates at the level of the national or cultural **vision of this relation pattern.** In the case of SP 3 (*There are apples in the tree*) English-speakers view the *apple-tree* relation as that of an **object** (apples) **within a limited space** (tree). With Turks this particular relationship is not very discrete, while Georgians and Russians view the same relation as **an object** (apples) **on an object** (tree). In other words, in the case of English the **apples are perceived against the green background of the tree (limited space),** while for the rest of the languages - with a slight variation in Turkish - **apples appear or grow *on the branches*** of the tree, apples are added **on to** a tree. This change in reflecting the same relation results **in a difference in the means of language expression (on > in,** for Turkish **–ta** as well**).** In contrast, in SP1 (*There is an apple **on** the table)*, there is no difference in the relational pattern. So SP 1 remains unaltered and hence, no difference in language expression occurs.

Now, let us analyze the instance with the *plane* (*There are a hundred passengers **on** the plane*). In the element of the *plane* in the *passenger-plane* relation pattern, the passengers are perceived in **space (air) without any support,** as if **"suspended" in the air** (cf. *The plane is in the sky*). For an English-speaker this image counteracts the picture of a person in real life where people normally have the natural support of the ground or a floor. The latter element (platform, support) becomes uppermost in the minds of native English speakers and the *passenger-plane* relation is viewed as **somebody standing on a certain support**, in this case the floor of a plane. The emphasis on the idea of support in the mentioned *passenger-plane* relation calls for a change of the relational expression in the basic vision: *passengers **in** (a plane)* and the search for an adequate means of expression leads to a change **in > on**. In other words, SP 4 (*There are a 100 passengers on the plane*) conceals several stages in the ultimate choice of the preposition: a) passengers **in** the sky (preposition **in** - within a space), b) passengers **without** a support below (preposition **on**), c) the idea of "without support" dominates over "within space"; d) the dominant idea wins and the language expression is tailored accordingly to resolve the tension. Thus, preposition **in > on**.

Unlike English-speakers, Turks (Turks have a slight variation of **–ta** again), Georgians and Russians perceive the same relation not as **somebody on a supporting platform** but as **somebody within the space (of a container like object).** This type of

relation is expressed by the preposition **in** and it is this preposition that is found in similar sentences[4].

It follows that, a change in the vision or perception of objectively existing relations results in a change in the language means of expression. This statement formulated in a reverse way also holds true: **a change in the language means of expression (cf. in > on) is a signal for a change in the perception of the relational pattern reflecting** objectively existing relations. When this happens (apples viewed within a space), difficulty in language acquisition occurs. Any time students make mistakes in the use of the mentioned prepositions signals confusion and/or replacement of the **vision or perception of the relational patterns** of FL by L1. Confusion will stay and mistakes will continue to occur (using **in** instead of **on,** and vice versa) until the perception of the relational pattern is corrected. To achieve this end causes for the deviation from language expressions based on identical relational patterns should be searched for in the **vision of objective relations**, found, explained and demonstrated to students.

The foregoing discussion allows us to draw several conclusions relevant to the proper understanding of grammatical semantics:

a) The objectively existing relations are stable, unchangeable and constant;
b) Every language has its specific vision or perception of these relations;
c) Every language has a set of language expressions to express relations as found in the outer world;
d) The vision or perception of relations of one language may coincide with that of another language, or it may not;
e) When visions or perceptions coincide, corresponding language means of expression are used;
f) When visions or perceptions differ, language means also differ.

Accordingly the above- cited definitions (p. 2-3) focus on the language aspect of grammar (form) only leaving without attention the grammatical meaning of affixes (another language aspect) based entirely on the relations existing in the outer world.

Consequently, **grammar** can be defined as **a unity of specifically arranged inter-connected micro-systems of language means of expression with each micro-system reflecting *relations* existing in different segments of the objective world.**

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[4] In this context it seems relevant to note that there have been quite a few instances of using **in** instead of **on** in similar English sentences (*in the plain/in the train*) which is a signal of a change occurring in the English vision.

Therefore, in order to teach grammar clearly and understandably it is not sufficient to know what is traditionally understood under the knowledge of grammar: (a) the repertoire of the grammatical affixes of a language, (b) their arrangement into micro-systems, and (c) the rules of applying the affixes to language. It is essential to (d) understand the **meaning** of a grammatical suffix, and (e) see the objectively existing **relation/s it reflects.** Moreover, in the EFL (or any foreign language teaching) environment it becomes crucial for a teacher to *see differences in the way these relations are perceived by native and non-native speakers of English* in order to enhance the effectiveness of grammar acquisition.

The examples presented above are based on concrete objects, concrete extra-linguistic relations and are expressed by concrete lexical items (prepositions). Things become more complicated when teachers deal with **abstract relations and abstract concepts**. The teacher's task becomes much more difficult. Appropriate techniques of explanation (verbal, translational, visual, etc.) are needed; simplicity and clarity become vital but incomparably hard to attain. The English system of tenses that we are about enter demonstrates this difficulty.

System of Tenses as System of Relations

Relational pattern. The concept of tense rests on two abstract notions - **time** and **action**. **Time** (not tense) is a universal, unchangeable and constant phenomenon of the objective world and is viewed as a unity of three aspects: past, all the days before present, present, point of count and future, all the days that will come after present. **Action** on the other hand, is as a **constant, innate** attribute of human life denoting various actions performed by people. The relationship between the two in the objective world is marked by the dominance of time over action and therefore, the basic pattern for the tense system of any language rests on the **time-action** relation pattern reflecting the dominant position of the first member towards the other. Schematically the concept of time, i.e. the first member of the pattern can be expressed as a circle with three divisions (**Fig. 3**):

Three Aspects of Time as Universal Phenomenon

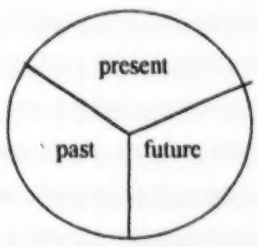


Fig. 2

Tenses as opposed to **time are a grammatical micro-system with specific means of language expression** used to reflect the objectively existing relations of *time-action* and mirror perceptions regarding these relations. By doing so the tense system of any language brings together two universal phenomena of different nature: cosmic and human after having been processed through the nations' collective minds and molded into specific relational formulas reflecting the national and/or cultural perception. Some perceptions of the *time-action* pattern coincide but others may differ from nation to nation or from culture to culture. There is nothing unexpected to find more dissimilar visions between abstract relations (see further) than between concrete objects (cf. apples - tree, passengers - plane). Therefore, it should not be unexpected to find grammatical micro-systems concerned with abstract relations to be much more diverse and difficult to comprehend than those reflecting concrete relations found readily in the surrounding world. *A priori*, a teacher of English should expect that the tense systems of the target and native languages (in our case, English and Turkish respectively) **should differ in reflecting the above-mentioned abstract time-action relation.** If such differences exist they are likely to cause much difficulty in understanding and learning the English tense system. Let us explore English and Turkish tenses from a relational perspective starting with the present time section of the time-space diagram (**Fig. 2**) and the present tense.

In English there are four present tenses belonging to four different groups: Simple, Continuous, Perfect and Perfect Continuous. It means that within one present time section English differentiates four types of present tenses or to be even more exact, four sets of language means of expression to designate four various types of actions (momentous, progressive, resultative and resultative-progressive) within one time segment of present. Putting it differently, **the dominant idea in the time-action relation for English is not *time*, it is *action*. The concept of time is subordinated to the primary idea of the type of action and, therefore, it is secondary**. Consequently, the model of *time-action* relation pattern should be modified to *action-time* for English accentuating the dominance of the first member. This priority of action over time is expressed by assigning certain language means of expression (26 elements) in all to each type. Schematically the above can be expressed diagrammatically as follows (**Fig. 3**):

Action-Time Relation Patterns for Present Time in English

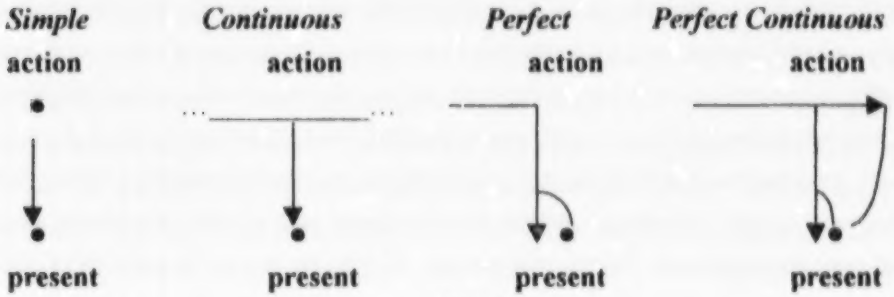


Fig. 3

Respectively, the time-space circle diagram will be modified as shown in **Fig. 4**:

English Action-Time Vision for Present

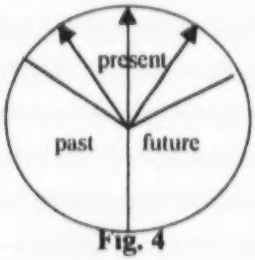


Fig. 4

It is obvious that the vision of the present time space for English is very segmented. A similar segmentation is found in the past and future time sections as **the logic and the principle of *action-time* relation is preserved throughout the whole tense system.** This cannot but produce similarly segmented time space sections in the time space diagram (**Fig. 5**):

English Action-Time Vision for Present - Past - Future

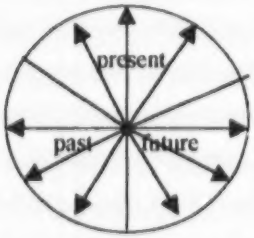


Fig. 5

The preceding discussion of the English tenses reveals their complicated, segmented but at the same time very logically-structured nature where each section is an attempt **to concretize and make discrete various *action-time* relations and give them different language means of expression.**

For teaching purposes the presented diagram is very important because it clearly reveals the dominant action-time principle in English and makes the entire system transparent, logical, easy to understand and therefore, easy to remember. Having exposed students to the basic relation pattern of English tenses they can easily navigate the English tense system through replacing the time indicator: present, past or future in the scheme (**Fig. 6**):

Action-Time Relation Patters in English Tenses

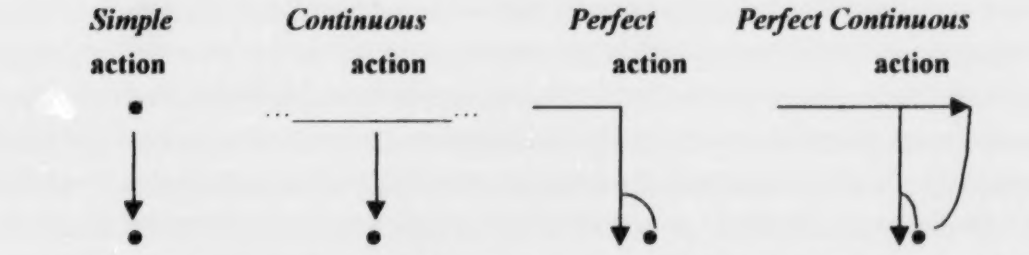


Fig. 6

On the language level the scheme operates as a formula with one empty slot that can be filled with either present, past or future time indicator (*is/are, was/were, will be*) as given below:

Table IV

Language formula for Continuous Tenses

I	_____ writing	We	_____ writing
You	_____ writing	You	_____ writing
He/she/it	_____ writing	They	_____ writing

Depending on what forms (present, past or future) of the auxiliary **be** fill the blanks, the respective tense will be produced. Hence, *by demonstrating the changeable and unchangeable elements of the scheme we sensitise students to the fundamental*

principle of English tenses and create certain expectancy of a variety of language means of expression as well as the number of tenses to be learnt.

And now, let us have a look at the Turkish tense system from the same angle and try to find out the way Turks view the time-action relationship in all the time domains (present, past, future) of the time-space diagram (**Fig. 2** p. 11). As with English, present time will be the first item of our concern.

The Turkish language distinguishes between two present tenses: Present I and Present II[5]. Present I has several meanings listed below in order of relevance:

a) Antalya' da çalişiyor - He **is working** in Antalia (cf. Present Continuous).

b) Kendisini haftada iki defa görüyorum- I see him twice a week (cf. Present Simple).

c) Yarin gidiyorum - I am going tomorrow (cf. Present Continuous for planned future actions).

d) Iki sene-dir bu evde oturuyor - It is two years he is living in this house (cf. Present Perfect or Present Perfect Continuous), and

e) Burada haziran ayindan beri oturuyor - (lit.) He is living here since the month of June (cf. Present Perfect Continuous; Lewis, p. 109).

The examples above obviate that Turkish, like English, distinguishes between moment-action (sentence 2), progress action (sentence 1), result (sentence 4) and result-progress (sentences 4 and 5) but, unlike English, **it is the *time member* in the *time-action* relation that dominates in the Turkish vision of the pattern.** The type of the action is subordinated to the concept of time and therefore, only the latter constituent (time) is "granted permission" to have a means of language expression. Therefore, being a singular concept time is given only one means of expression (**-yor**) which denotes all the five varieties of action (**Fig. 7**):

Fig. 7

[5] **Present II** expresses emphatic progressive action, which creates not a grammatical but a stylistic difference and therefore, is excluded from the analysis.

Comparing English and Turkish present tenses, it is easy to observe that **the Turkish idea of present covers several action types that are assigned separate means of expression in English**. The concept of time is uppermost in the Turkish tense system while it is the type of action that dominates the English vision. Thus, Turkish and English have a reversed perception of the *time-action* relation formula. It follows, that Turkish keeps the initial distribution of members in the *time-action* pattern, assigning greater importance to its first member (**Fig. 8**, p. 16):

Turkish-English Vision of Time-Action Relations in Present

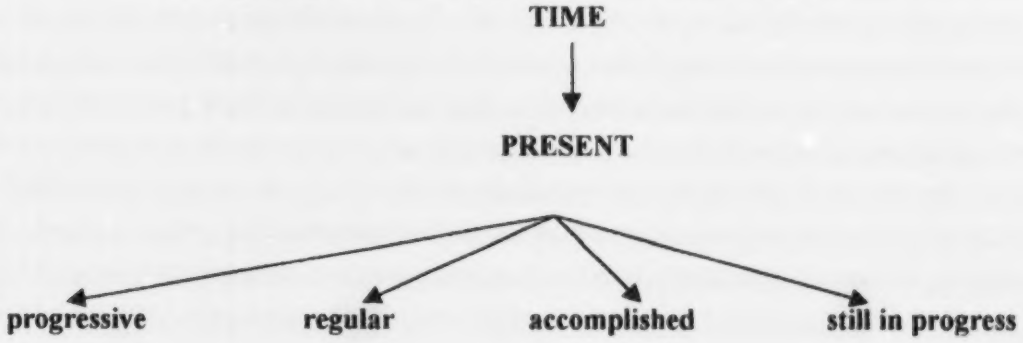
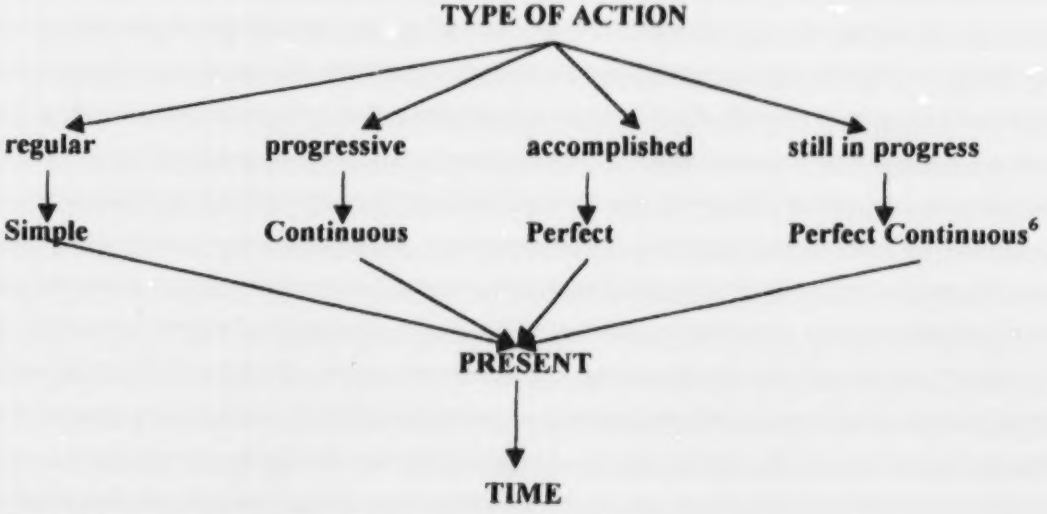


Fig. 8 a

English-Turkish Vision of Time-Action Relations in Present



[6] Simple, Continuous, Perfect and Perfect-Continuous stand for language means of expression.

Fig. 8 b

The time dominant perception of the *time-action* pattern is held throughout the Turkish tense system, i.e. in the past and future tenses as well. There is only one past time/tense Aorist, to which all the possible action types are subordinated and therefore all these actions are allotted only one language expression[7] (Lewis, p. 118).

Future repeats the structure of the present and distinguishes between two types Future I and Future II. Like Present II, Future II is opposed to Future I on the basis of *emphatic vs neutral*[8] and not the *time-action* relation and therefore, Future II cannot influence the Turkish concept of *time-dominant* identity. Hence, the use of a single grammatical affix *-ecek* in future. It follows that, all Turkish tenses coincide with entire segments of corresponding time space domains and repeat the basic configuration of the time-space scheme (**Fig. 9**):

Time and Tense Systems in Turkish

Fig . 9

A simple comparison of Turkish and English tense diagrams (**Fig-s 5** and **9**) reveals several features significant for English grammar instruction to Turkish students:

1. The English tense system is incomparably more complex than that of Turkish;
2. The difference in tense systems is caused by different perception of the time-action relation existing in real life. In fact, they are opposite: the Turkish *time-dominant* pattern of *time-action* relation versus the English *action-dominant* pattern. Hence, the two have a reverse *time-action* formula for their tense systems;

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[7] Turkish distinguishes between **dı** (and its allomorphs) and **mış** (and its allomorphs) affixes in the Aorist but they indicate the manner the speaker has acquired certain information and therefore, they have no bearing on the time-action pattern.

[8] Future II "is employed solely for cursing" (Lewis, p. 115).

3. The borderlines of time and tense do not coincide in English while in Turkish tenses they repeat the configuration of time boundaries;
4. The mentioned reversed perceptions and the segmented vs non-segmented time spaces create both, formal and semantic difficulties.
5. Formal barriers include a great number of language means of expression (26 in English; also, see a section on *Language means of Expression*) as opposed to basic 3 inflectional endings in Turkish.
6. Semantic barriers, i.e. the reverse time-action relation vision are responsible for a number of sentences with replaced tenses like "I am working every day" instead of "I work", "She is speaking good English" instead of "She speaks good English", or "You are always saying" instead of "You always say", etc.

The above-given examples illustrate *time-action* relation confusion within the same time domain. However, we may have cases when the domains of tenses (present, past, future) are also confused. Confusion of Present Perfect and Past Simple is a good case in point. Examples are so numerous that a few quotes from my students' repertoire will suffice: *He read several articles* (instead of *He has read several articles*), *I had dinner* (instead of *I have had dinner)*, *I finished my test* (instead of *I have finished my test*), etc. These and similar instances are generated by a clash in the vision of time-section boundaries. For Turkish speakers there is a clear differentiation between the present and past time boundaries, while the English see a link, a connection between the two (present and past) through an action-result unity as expressed in the Present Perfect Tense. In the mind of the English speaker this connection is logical and natural because it rests on the same action-dominated perception of the time-action relation pattern. The Turks on the other hand, draw a clear demarcation line between present and past as well as the actions that occur in the respective time-domains. The mentioned link between the past and present, being significant for English speakers, is given a separate means of expression (Present Perfect), while for Turkish speakers such a link does not exist at all. A non-existent phenomenon can have no language expression and therefore, none is found in Turkish. The described "collision" of tense-systems is a "collision" of counter visions of extra-linguistically existing identical relations between time and action. Therefore, while learning English a Turkish learner has to make a sudden and big leap from one type of vision to another and in the process, they cannot but produce an innumerable number of mistakes.

How can teachers help students to make this "big leap"?

The solution that I found to this problem is **a change from the traditional itemized presentation of tenses to a systemic one**[9]. The method envisages (a) sensitizing students to the holistic picture of the English tense system at the very outset (b) to be followed by the itemized presentation of various tenses. In order to successfully accomplish the first step (a) the teacher has to give the outline of the major points (listed as conclusions on pp. 17-18) in an introductory lesson/talk on the English tense.

The quality of instruction would be even higher if, in addition to the mentioned features of the English tense system, students' native language is also involved. In this event, complex grammatical issues should be discussed on a comparative basis revealing both similar and differentiating features of the two tense systems concerned. This type of material presentation increases students' awareness as well as interest and stimulates them to participate actively. Such an approach will enable them to see a connection between what they know (L1), and what is being learned (EFL). Teachers of Turkish-speakers should provide students with much illustrative material and encourage them to provide their own examples and by taking advantage of students' natural desire to share, involve them in discussions. In this way, students become participants in the process of grammar explanation without them even realizing that they are doing so because the process seems to have evolved so naturally and without any effort.

From my experience, the systemic teaching of grammar greatly facilitates students' understanding and reduces the extent of error production. It enables the teacher to gradually lead students into complex and new material. It provides them with a holistic framework for grammar items being taught and allows them to move easily between various elements within the system. The suggested approach not only contributes to clarity and better understanding of grammatical issues but also eases the way to language acquisition, with less misunderstanding and misuse of tenses.

In brief, the suggested approach in teaching grammar (and not only English) gives an opportunity both to the teacher and student to explore the fascinating but differently constructed grammatical systems of the target and native tongues in their **most significant** features that can be followed by introducing discrete grammar points. Additionally, the method enables students to acquire a whole picture of a certain grammatical segment, a larger scheme so to say, into which specific grammar points can be easily fit later on.

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[9] On the same method applied in teaching the sound system of a FL, see: A. Meskhi, *Role of Phonology in EFL acquisition*. Proceedings of the 6th International Conference "Challenge and Creativity in Teaching Beginners", Bilkent, Ankara, February 15-17, 2001. *In print*. Of the same author, *Role of Phonology in Foreign Language Acquisition*. Proceedings of the 5th National Conference held by NCOLCTL. Arlington, Virginia, April 12-14. *In print*.

On the other hand, the method requires a top-down vision not only of the specific grammatical system taught but of the whole language system which suggests the knowledge of at least the most fundamental linguistic issues that our teachers, unfortunately, lack so much[10].

Language Means of Expression

Relational difficulties, which may also be called semantic and/or logical, get further complicated by formal factors or language means of expression. We have often heard our students producing "cropped" sentences like: *I waiting at the traffic lights* instead of *I **was** waiting at the traffic lights*, *He prompted me* instead of *He **has** prompted me*, *He given me the book* instead of *He **has** given me the book*, *The house built last year* instead of *The house **was** built last year*, and so on. Even more interesting is the fact that, similar mistakes occur even when students are well aware of the tenses and have mastered them to a considerable extent. In order to find an answer to this question, let us compare two sentences **(Table V)**:

Table V

English	Turkish
I am working in Istanbul now.	Simdi Istanbul'da çalişiyorum.

In the English sentence various grammatical categories: person, tense and number are expressed through the auxiliary **be**, while the lexical content of the message is conveyed by the present participle of the main verb. Contrary to this, in Turkish it is the sequence of different juxtaposed affixes that express the mentioned grammatical categories: **-yor** - Present I with a continuous meaning and **-um** - first person, singular. This and other identical cases bring into play a ver significant difference between the two languages: the **analytical** nature of English and the **agglutinative** character of Turkish. Being an analytical language, English makes use of various auxiliaries in order to form grammatical categories (cf. interrogative and negative forms of the Present and Past Simple, Continuous, Perfect and Perfect Continuous Tenses, etc.). Being an agglutinative language, Turkish, uses various affixes that "glue" to each other inside the word-form to

[10] At present I am working on designing a short course of lectures for TESOL/EFL teachers concentrating on the most significant linguistics issues needed in classroom instruction. Therefore, I will greatly appreciate any type of input on the difficulties in sound, grammar and/or vocabulary presentation and/or explanation from anyone who reads these lines. I could be reached at: <ameskhi@yahoo.com>

express various grammatical categories (tense, person, number). Agglutination saturates the whole grammatical system of Turkish and as such, the teacher encounters its consequences every now and then. This presents the necessity to make students aware of this dominant difference between the two languages in an introductory lesson and point out the types of possible mistakes it can generate in future. Students should be exposed to a number of examples illustrating Turkish *single word forms* being opposed to a two- and even three-element-patterns of English (interrogative and negative forms of Simple Tenses, Continuous, Perfect, etc.). It should be explained to students that while producing such sentences they transmit native one-word-form-pattern to the multi-constituent patterns of English word-forms. Putting it differently, **Turkish students form English predicates by using their native way of predicate formation**. Therefore, the number of mistakes with only the verbal form (infinitive, past, and/or the two participles) are not likely to decrease unless the cause is brought to light and shown to students.

Thus, the next piece of advice to teachers as part and parcel of the systemic approach can be formulated as follows:

1. Make students aware of the major distinction of the grammatical systems of English and Turkish: analytical English vs agglutinative Turkish;
2. Show that various grammatical categories in English are formed by means of various auxiliaries, helper words, which, being words and not affixes, are written separately but make up one whole concept;
3. Conversely, in Turkish grammatical categories are formed by means of adding various affixes to the root of the word in a specific sequence;
4. Illustrate the point with a number of examples and invite students to offer their own sentences and discuss them.

All these items demonstrated through concrete examples and with the involvement of students' native language will function as "preventive" measures against a number of similar mistakes being made in future.

PART II - METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The preceding analysis of the English and Turkish tense systems with a focus on two major differences: a) different perceptions of relational patterns, and b) analysis vs agglutination reveals the significant role textbooks play in EFL acquisition. In the light of the foregoing discussion it becomes obvious that textbook designers should be extremely careful in selecting grammatical material, in sequencing of various grammatical items, in

apportioning the appropriate amount of material to be covered in each unit, in discussing grammar in reference sections, etc.

Fortunately, some basic principles of teaching as well as textbook development have already been worked out. Some of them listed below are especially important:

1. The principle of material selection conditioned by the aim of the textbook;
2. The principle of quantitative parameters of the selected items;
3. The principle of proper apportioning of the material;
4. The principle of gradual increase of complexity in material ordering;
5. The principle of applying visual aids (pictures, graphs, tables, diagrams, etc.).

But are TESOL/EFL textbook developers as attentive and careful to what and how they present?

Let us have a look at the grammar section of *Life Lines Intermediate* (T. Hutchinson, pp. 8-64; 120- 28) and see how these pedagogic requirements are put in action (**Table VI**):

Table VI

Tense Ratio in *Life Lines Intermediate*

Simple	Continuous	Perfect	Perfect Continuous
Present - Unit 1	**Present - Unit 1**	**Present - Unit 1**	**Present - Unit 7**
Past - Unit 2	**Past - Unit 2**	**Past - Unit 2**	
Future - Unit 3 *Will, going to, Pr. Cont. with future meaning*			

The table indicates that the ratio of the tense material to be introduced in the first three units equals 50% of all the tenses, i. e. 6 tenses out of 12 (active forms) are taught during the first two units in a textbook of 14 units. If we look at this ratio from the point of view of the Turkish student, he faces almost unsurpassable barriers; a) a **reverse *time-action* relationship pattern,** b) **various ways of language expression**, and c) an intimidating array of tenses.

Thus, principles 3 and 4 (the principle of proper apportioning of the material and gradual increase of complexity in material ordering) are violated from the very start. All

this cannot but cause problems both in teaching and learning English tenses. Teachers have to rush through the material in order to cover the program, there is no possibility to devote sufficient time to each item, to practice, and follow up with their implementation in speech.

Furthermore, students find it hard to remember the cascade of auxiliaries and verb forms (26 elements), their combinations and all these disparate elements seem so illogical and absurd against his native mode of grammatical thinking. Added to this is the Present Perfect, which falls out of the Turkish tense system altogether. For the Turkish student Present Perfect is not a Present Tense in the first place. It is a past tense expressed by two different words against his native one.

On top of all this, Unit 2 of the textbook reinforces the same relational patters and the student is even more confused. In Unit 3 where the future is introduced things become still further complicated. The Unit introduces three items, out of which two are tenses in the traditional understanding of the word, while the third one is **a construction, an idiomatic expression** (*be going to* with a future meaning). It is not a tense! It is a fixed expression denoting future time due to its grammaticalized semantics! And yet, not a single word about the distinction between the two is mentioned. To aggravate things even more we find modal verbs in the same unit and modal verbs always have future implications. If all this is not confusing to native English speakers, it certainly is so to the Turkish learner.

Where does all this take us? The answer is simple: what happens in fact, is that teachers just throw all this disproportionately and illogically presented material at the student and until the bewildered student sorts this all out there comes another unit and other grammar issues he/she is expected to master. Small wonder why students make so many mistakes and cannot speak fluently. As to me, I wonder how they can speak at all!

The presented analysis as well as my long teaching experience makes me confident to say that time has come for textbook designers to reconsider their traditional *discrete grammar points* approach and tailor TESOL/EFL textbooks to the needs of specific language communities. In order to improve the teaching material authors should take into consideration unique characteristics of both languages - English and the native language of the intended audience of their products. I am deeply convinced that time has come when adult learners of English should be offered more challenging and sophisticated techniques adequately combined with the already existing ones, and this, I believe, is the area where systemic approach can have its say. I fully realize the complexities involved with the dramatic changes I see fit for future quality education but

this is **the thing to do** if we really care about the two people in the classroom - the teacher and the student.

(*I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues at Isik University: Esat Oren, Ercan Balci and Mübeccel Kızıltan for helping me with Turkish issues at various stages of writing the present article. A.M.*).

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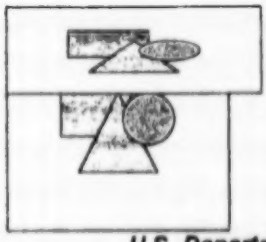

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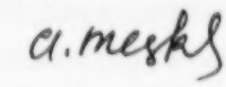

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